



## County of Erie

JOEL A. GIAMBRA  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ANTHONY J. BILLITTIER IV, M.D., FACEP  
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

February 28, 2007

Dear Parents:

As many of you know, St. Joseph's Collegiate Academy is mourning the death of a student due to a type of meningitis. The Department of Health has been collaborating with school administration and staff in order to provide you with the information you need to ensure the health and safety of your families. Here are some facts you should know.

### **Meningitis:**

- Meningitis is a rare illness caused by many different bacteria and viruses.
- *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is the bacteria that caused this student's meningitis.
- **People who have been in contact with someone diagnosed with meningitis caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* do not need to be treated with antibiotics as a preventive measure.**
- Only cases of meningitis caused by a different bacteria, *Neisseria meningitidis*, require preventive treatment of contacts. Many students have been vaccinated against this type of meningitis because they have had a meningitis vaccine.

### **Infections caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*:**

- Many healthy people have this bacteria living in their upper respiratory tract, even though they are not ill.
- The bacteria can cause infections such as: middle ear infections, sinus infections, pneumonia, blood infections, and rarely, meningitis.
- Infections with this bacteria are very common, but it is rare for those infected to develop meningitis.
- The bacteria is spread primarily by contact with respiratory droplets from the nose or mouth of an infected person.
- Infections caused by this bacteria can be treated with antibiotics.

Parents who have additional questions and concerns may contact their health care providers or the **Eric County Department of Health at 858-7697**. If anyone in your family develops symptoms of severe respiratory illness or meningitis such as a high fever, severe headache or stiff neck, you should contact your health care provider promptly.

We join the St. Joseph's Collegiate Academy community in expressing our condolences to the student's family and friends at this most difficult of times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Billittier, IV". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "A" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Anthony J. Billittier, IV, MD, FACEP  
Commissioner